

## **CAMPYLOBACTERIOSIS (*Campylobacter*)**

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### **What is Campylobacteriosis?**

Campylobacteriosis is an infectious disease caused by bacteria of the genus *Campylobacter*. Most people who become ill with campylobacteriosis get diarrhea, cramping, abdominal pain, and fever within 2 to 5 days after exposure to the organism. The diarrhea may be bloody and can be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. The illness typically lasts 1 week. Some persons who are infected with *Campylobacter* don't have any symptoms at all. In persons with compromised immune systems, *Campylobacter* occasionally spreads to the bloodstream and causes a serious life-threatening infection.

### **Who can be infected?**

All age groups can be infected by *Campylobacter*.

### **How are the bacteria spread?**

The bacteria are spread by eating or drinking food or water that is contaminated by the feces of an infected person or from contact with an infected pet (especially puppies and kittens).

Improperly cooked poultry, untreated water, and unpasteurized milk are the main sources of infection.

### **What are the symptoms of *Campylobacter* infection?**

Major symptoms are diarrhea, abdominal pain, not feeling well, and fever. Other symptoms may include nausea, vomiting and frequently bloody diarrhea. Many infections may be without symptoms.

### **How soon after infection do symptoms appear?**

Symptoms usually start two to five days after infection. The range can be one to ten days.

### **Where are *Campylobacter* found?**

Poultry, especially chickens, turkeys and water fowl usually carry the organism. Most farm animals and meat sources can carry the organism. Pets such as dogs and cats (especially puppies and kittens) can also be sources.

### **How long can a person spread *Campylobacter*?**

People can spread the disease for several days to several weeks after they are infected. The period of communicability can be shortened to a few days by providing treatment.

### **Should infected people be excluded from school or work?**

People with diarrhea (especially children in day care or people who handle food) should not go to school, day care or work. After the diarrhea ends, persons may return, but they should be careful to wash their hands after using the toilet.

### **What is the treatment for *Campylobacter* infection?**

No treatment is generally recommended. However, persons with diarrhea should drink plenty of liquids. Antibiotics may be used to treat persons with severe cases.

### **How can the spread of *Campylobacter* infection be stopped?**

1. Always refrigerate meat products. Never leave raw meat at room temperature.
2. Always cook meat completely. Make sure that the meat is cooked throughout (no longer pink), any juices run clear, and the inside is cooked to 170oF (77oC) for breast meat, and 180oF (82oC) for thigh meat. If you are served undercooked poultry in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking.
3. Always cook raw eggs or foods containing raw eggs well.
4. Avoid using unpasteurized milk and untreated surface water.
5. Prevent cross-contamination in the kitchen: Use separate cutting boards for foods of animal origin and other foods. carefully clean all cutting boards, countertops and utensils with soap and hot water after preparing raw food of animal origin.
6. Carefully wash hands before and after preparing food.
7. Make sure children wash their hands carefully, especially after using the toilet or handling pets.
8. Always wash hands with soap and warm water after using the toilet or changing diapers.

### **Where can I get more information?**

- Your personal doctor
- Your local health department, listed in your telephone directory
- The Utah Department of Health, Office of Epidemiology (801) 538-6191

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